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AD/CE/EA & FONSI/DECISION RECORD
Sheepline Rx Burn Protection Electric Fence
Environmental Assessment
EA # OR-030-02-020

BLM OFFICE:	Vale District, Jordan Resource Area
PROPOSED ACTION:	Construct an electric fence to protect the Sheepline rehabilitation burn
LOCATION:	McCormick Allotment, Sheepline Pasture, Sec. 6 & 7 T40S R40E
APPLICANT:	Nick Wilkinson

CONFORMANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAND USE PLAN

This proposed action is subject to the following land use plans:

Preferred Land Use Alternative (MFP), 1983
Southern Malheur (RPS), 1984

These plans have been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms with the land use plans terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5

BACKGROUND

The McCormick Allotment is located approximately 6 miles west of McDermitt, Nevada and north of the Nevada/Oregon border. The exact location of the proposed project is within the Sheepline Pasture of the McCormick Allotment (See Figure 1). Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*) and mountain big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata vasyana*) dominate the proposed project site. Mountain big sagebrush occurs in high density stands with sparse herbaceous understory in some high elevation pastures in the Oregon Canyon Mountains. This sagebrush density reduces biodiversity; concentrates livestock on open meadows and other less brushy sites such as riparian areas, resulting in heavier than desired grazing use; and allows a buildup of fuel loads that could lead to catastrophic wildfire. Wildfire suppression and historic livestock grazing (which harvests fine fuels) have lowered the incidence of natural wildfire, a major regulator of sagebrush density. Controlled burning of selected mountain big sagebrush patches would increase the occurrence of grasses and forbs, produce a greater diversity of wildlife habitat, increase forage production and improve the distribution of grazing use. In October of 2001, 1104 acres were treated in the Sheepline Pasture with prescribed fire in order to create patches in the closed canopy of mountain big sagebrush. The result was a natural looking, mosaic burn.

NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of the temporary electric fence is to exclude cattle use from the burned area for at least two growing seasons or until the vegetation has recovered sufficiently to allow grazing. The temporary electric fence will also allow cattle grazing to occur in the remainder of the Sheepline pasture and provide relief for the permittee.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Alternative I: Proposed Action

The proposed action is to build approximately 1.4 miles of 2-wire temporary electric fence (figure 2) along the west boundary of the Sheepline rehabilitation burn. The fence would be flagged in order to make it visible to big game residing within the project area. Approximately .4 miles of fence would be within the Fifteenmile Creek WSA (OR-3-156), however, the fence would be constructed within the zone of influence of an existing way. This way was used as a fire break during black lining efforts.

The proposed project would be constructed prior to cattle turnout, to protect the burned areas from grazing. Materials would be supplied by the BLM. The operator and various BLM personnel would construct the temporary fence. The fence would be up for at least two growing seasons. The growing season is defined as beginning in April and extending through seed shatter of key grass species. Once the temporary electric fence is installed, 75 head of cattle would be allowed to graze in the remainder of the pasture from 6/25-8/1. The permittee would be responsible for all fence maintenance. The permittee and BLM personnel would remove the fence once the decision has been made that the burn area has recovered adequately.

B. Alternative II

The temporary electric fence would not be constructed and livestock would be excluded from the entire pasture for two growing seasons.

C. Other Alternatives Considered but Eliminated From Further Study

There were three other alternatives that were considered but were determined to be too expensive to be considered or would not meet the need and objectives for the proposed action and the BLM.

Buying hay for the permittee to feed their cattle during the time of need. This alternative was risky and precedent setting. It would be very costly to the BLM to purchase the hay, haul the hay, and deliver the hay.

Allowing the permittee to graze in the Whitehorse Butte Allotment. The Whitehorse Ranch has a two year pasture rotation with the Willow Creek Pasture and Fifteenmile Creek Pasture. The permittee could graze the Fifteenmile Creek Pasture while it was on a two year rest cycle. The use would be with 150 head of cattle for 35 days. The normal use of this pasture is 871 head of cattle for 60 days. The proposed use would be very light within the pasture. However, riparian concerns were raised on two creeks within this pasture. Concerns over cattle using the riparian areas on these two creeks generated too much risk for the amount of cattle use requested. Therefore, this alternative does not meet our resource needs for the area.

Allowing increased grazing use within the permittee's other pastures and allowing rest in the entire Sheepline pasture. The current livestock allocation for the McCormick allotment is 6301 AUMs. However, the permittee utilizes on average approximately 4000 AUMs per year. The permittee has voluntarily taken 2300 AUMs nonuse in their allotment to allow improvement of upland and riparian species. The permittee did not want to increase use and risk lowering rangeland health within the McCormick Allotment.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The McCormick Allotment (#01202) is located northwest of McDermitt, NV. The allotment varies greatly in elevation and topography. Topography varies from rolling hills to steep canyons.

1. Vegetation

The dominant plant species on the landscape surrounding the proposed action is Mountain big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata vaseyana*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudorogneria spicatum*), and Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*). Scattered communities of mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus ledifolius*) occupy the hillsides and quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) occupy the Fifteenmile Creek banks. The majority of the affected area is late seral range. In accordance with 50 CFR Part 17, the Resource Area Botanist conducted a field search to ensure that actions authorized by the BLM would not contribute to the need for a candidate species to become listed. No known or suspected special status plants were discovered within the proposed area.

2. Soils and Water Resources

The soils in the project area consist of: Unit 83-82/2-4; CU 83 soils, 3-12 percent slopes, 30 percent CU 82 soils, 7-20 percent slopes and Unit 96/5-6; Unit96 Rock land, 20-60+ percent slopes.

Classification Unit 82; Soils are moderately deep, loamy, well drained soils derived from thin loess over basalt or rhyolite bedrock. They are on mostly northerly slopes on gently to very steeply sloping terrain. Elevations range from 4,500 to 7,500 feet. Average annual precipitation is from 11 to 15 inches, and mean annual air temperature centers around 43 degrees F. The soil profile by depth consist of silt loams to stony silt loams over basalt bedrock at 30+ inches.

Classification Unit 83; Soils are shallow, very stony, well drained soils over basalt, rhyolite, or welded tuff. They occur on gently undulating to rolling lava plateaus with some very steep faulted and dissected terrain. Soils occur at elevations mostly above 5,000 feet. Average annual precipitation is from 11 to 15 inches, and mean annual air temperature centers around 43 degrees F. The soil profile by depth consist of very stony silt loam, stony silty clay loam, to stony silty clay over basalt bedrock at 18+ inches.

Classification Unit 96; (Steep Rock land) This is a miscellaneous land unit consisting of rough, steeply sloping areas that are predominantly shallow, very stony soils interspersed with rock outcrop. Steep Rock land occurs mainly as canyons and escarpments along margins and dissected portions of lava plateaus.

The proposed project area lies within the headwater acreage of Fifteenmile and Doolittle creeks, two perennial flowing streams that drain into Whitehorse Creek. The proposed location route of the project would cross Doolittle Creek where the stream channel is usually dry during the summer months. This area is

within the Sheepline Pasture and has been utilized by livestock each year during the months of June through August.

3. Air Quality

There are no air quality observation stations in the project area. However, it is believed that air quality is considered to be very good.

4. Noxious Weeds

There are no known noxious weeds in the Sheepline Pasture.

5. Livestock

The McCormick Allotment (I category) has 1 permittee authorized to graze and has no Allotment Management Plan. Even though the Sheepline Pasture has no allotment management plan, it is set up to be grazed with 250 head of cattle from 5/15-8/1 yearly. The permittee usually turns out approximately 190 head of cattle from mid June to the first of August with utilization rates averaging 30%. Doolittle, Gopher, and Sheepline Canyon Springs are all fenced to exclude cattle and are a source of livestock water. Fifteenmile Spring and a small portion of Fifteenmile Creek are located within the pasture and unfenced. It is also a good source of water and forage.

6. Wildlife

Priority Species and Seasons of Use

Sagebrush obligate birds and mule deer are identified as the key management species of importance. The primary seasons of wildlife occupancy are summer and fall (June - November).

Greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus urophasianus*) are present within the project area. They are a species of high public interest and the subject of recent public inquiry related to potential listing under the protection of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Mule deer within the project area are managed under very limited hunter entry by the state of Oregon in order to provide trophy deer hunting opportunities.

Certain sagebrush obligate species (see inventory data section) are at risk throughout the intermountain region due to population declines and many of the breeding birds present are neotropical migratory species that are under cooperative international management.

General Habitat Setting

High elevation rangelands of the Oregon Canyon Mountains (OCM) addressed in this document offer some of the most complex, diverse and productive sagebrush steppe wildlife habitat found in eastern Oregon. The mountain sagebrush habitats where burning is proposed provide important wildlife food, structure and cover for several species that are of interest not only in Oregon but within the intermountain region in general. Furthermore, the character of the rangelands adjoining this mountain big sage type (including low sagebrush, mountain mahogany, bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*), serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), willow/aspen riparian communities, meadows, canyons and cliffs) are of a quality that make the project area rich in habitat transitions and overlapping wildlife use areas.

Thomas et al. (1984) described a relationship between wildlife and their habitats for southeast Oregon in which primary vegetation types (or habitat features) are used for breeding purposes, and other secondary communities are exploited for activities such as feeding. Given the diverse arrangement of

habitats in the OCM, the project area is no doubt a prime example of a setting in which complex, interrelated wildlife habitat uses are taking place among the available habitats. The significance of this point is that more species are using mountain big sage types as part of their life history requirements in the proposed action area than what may be accounted for if only the true sagebrush obligates, such as the brewer's sparrow, are considered.

General Attributes of Mountain Big Sagebrush Habitats that are Valuable to Wildlife

Mountain big sagebrush provides mid-level shrubby canopy structure for wildlife that is used for foraging, hiding, escaping predators, nesting and thermal cover. Generally speaking, the highest quality mountain big sagebrush stands are those that support a vigorous and diverse understory of herbaceous vegetation comprised of native grasses and forbs. Herbaceous understory vegetation is used by numerous species of wildlife for both forage and cover. In this case, perhaps the most important forage and cover consideration pertains to sage grouse. Healthy herbaceous understories also supply indirect food sources to species such as songbirds and sage grouse by supporting environments rich in insect life [2]. Insects offer high quality protein for song birds, sage grouse chicks and many other small species of wildlife.

Dense mountain big sagebrush types (>25% canopy) supporting a weak or depleted herbaceous understory are not necessarily an undesirable wildlife habitat condition. Dense sagebrush presence does not always require action to restore wildlife habitat values. In fact, shrub cover alone is frequently a primary habitat value for mule deer and non-game species, especially in landform types that offer very little topographic relief or where tall mountain shrubs are scarce (e.g. most of the proposed burn area). This is not to say BLM endorses depleted understory conditions or that their attainment is a wildlife habitat goal for the OCM. It is simply a statement of observed wildlife habitat use, and cover value that is often overlooked when considering land treatments.

Ultimately, it is the combined attributes and proportions of effective shrubby *and* herbaceous cover within sagebrush steppe that will meet a wide variety of wildlife habitat needs. Appendix Tables 1 and 2 describe the desired conditions for wildlife in big sagebrush habitats and the rationale for why they are needed. These data, assumptions and narratives were used for developing the impact analysis in this document.

In terms of wildlife habitat values, the project area supports an abundant shrub component of mountain big sage in predominantly heavy (15% - 25%) to dense (>25%) cover types. These are habitats known to support a wide array of sagebrush dependent species. On the other hand, open grass/forb habitats are somewhat limited and there is room for improvement in the density, distribution and vigor of herbaceous understory conditions.

Existing Wildlife Survey Data

There are no federal listed or proposed species of terrestrial wildlife within the project area that would require consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service regarding Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

With the exception of aerial sage grouse strutting ground inventories, funded jointly by BLM and the ODFW between 1996 and 1999, no systematic terrestrial wildlife survey work during the breeding period

has been conducted within the project area. However, based on several summer field visits the following terrestrial species have been observed within the project area.

Coopers hawk, red-tailed hawk, american kestrel, turkey vulture, northern harrier, prairie falcon, golden eagle, mourning dove, **sage grouse***, northern flicker, tree swallow, violet-green swallow, mountain bluebird, western wood-peewee, warbling vireo, white-crowned sparrow, rock wren, american robin, northern oriole, brown-headed cowbird, common raven, cassin's finch, black-headed grosbeak, gray flycatcher, **broad-tailed hummingbird**, green-tailed towhee, rufous-sided towhee, sage thrasher*, brewers sparrow*, vesper sparrow, mule deer, coyote, least chipmunk, golden mantled groundsquirrel, white-tailed jackrabbit, pacific treefrog, western spadefoot toad, wandering garter snake, gopher snake, western rattlesnake, racer, striped whipsnake, short-horned lizard. Other species likely occur to within the project area include: sagebrush vole*, shrew species, montane vole, deer mouse, cottontail rabbit;

Legend: * = sagebrush dependent species as per Partners in Flight and the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project [6]; neotropical migratory bird species are underlined, **Special Status Species per OR/WA BLM policy are indicated in bold typeface**.

Greater sage-grouse

Sage grouse range throughout most of the sagebrush steppe supported in the OCM. The Trout Creek Mountains and the Oregon Canyon Mountains combined support a habitat complex comprised of at least 45 leks over roughly 350,000 acres of steppe rangeland. This complex is substantially connected with a mosaic of well developed sagebrush cover types and has few areas where the effects of fire or seedings influence wildlife cover conditions. Within this mountainous region, which include portions of both the Vale and Burns districts, it is very likely that there is some level of sage grouse movement and seasonal habitat sharing across BLM administrative boundaries.

Sage grouse life history requirements are tied first and foremost to the presence of healthy sagebrush communities which are used for a variety of purposes including hiding, nesting and foraging. The presence of riparian and meadow habitats (particularly wet meadows) that are well distributed throughout different elevations and landforms provide food and water, especially during the summer and fall when upland habitats have dried out.

Based on current knowledge, sage grouse in the OCM appear to generally remain within close proximity of their breeding centers (leks) year-long. Sage grouse nesting activity within the project area is probably very limited, if it does occur at all, given the Spring snow cover characteristics of the proposed project area. Known leks are identified on Map X attached.

Heavy and persistent snowfall above the 6000' elevation, which essentially buries most sagebrush, is normal for the OCM. According to Connelly et al. (1999) sage grouse gradually walk out of their Summer ranges and seek out wind blown ridges of low sagebrush or various big sagebrush varieties where they winter. It is likely that they retreat onto the lowest mountain foothills where sagebrush is not covered in

snow during extreme snowfall conditions. The whereabouts of their severe winter survival areas are not known because winter survey data are very limited here as well as countywide.

The migratory habits of sage grouse reported from other western states generally do not appear to be a factor in their use of rangeland within Malheur County. Short elevational movements within mountain ranges and between breeding areas and winter use locations appear to be the norm. Water and riparian habitat availability influence their distribution substantially in the late summer and fall. During recent summer stream survey work in the McDermitt basin, sage grouse were encountered in most riparian habitats and at a variety of elevations.

The recent update of management guidelines for sage grouse by Connelly et al., in press (2000), provides a thorough rundown of issues and habitat character important to the species. The details of this document are not provided in this document, but a tabular summary of important habitat characteristics for sage grouse are provided in Table 3.

7. Threatened or Endangered Species

There are no Threatened or Endangered species of wildlife in the proposed project area.

8. Recreation and Visual Resources

Dispersed outdoor recreation in the proposed area consists primarily of hunting. Some dispersed sightseeing and day hiking may occur. Other recreation opportunities include backpacking, camping, photography, bird watching, and nature study. Visitation estimates are fewer than 800 people per year, primarily due to the WSA's remoteness, rough vehicular access, and distance from large population centers.

9. Cultural Resources

The majority of information available on the prehistory of the northern Great Basin comes from data gathered from excavations at rockshelters like Fort Rock Cave, Roaring Springs Cave, Catlow Cave, and Dirty Shame Rockshelter. At Dirty Shame Rockshelter, the earliest dates of occupation come from charcoal sources dated to 9500 B.P. (Hanes 1988:40). The eruption of Mt. Mazama at 7050 years ago and resultant ash layer provides an excellent time marker for dating cultural habitation in the area. The postglacial warming and drying reached a peak between about 7000 and 4000 BP, and a moderate reversal of this trend established a climate roughly like that of the present after about 4000 BP (Aikens 1993). With climatic changes, came a shift in floral and faunal species and the appearance of species that characterize arid environments. Overall, the prehistory of the northern Great Basin shows long continuity and adaptive change to distinctive ecosystems with a changing climate. The persistence of lithic and textile traditions and subsistence patters during these chronological periods supports the theory of cultural continuity throughout the northern Great Basin. The subsistence pattern was based on a broad spectrum seasonal round that utilized over 50 floral species, big and small game hunting and fishing. Pre-European contact Native American hunters and gatherers living in southeast Oregon's high desert were extremely well adapted to their environment, and used it effectively and efficiently. Tribal band names for Pre-Contact people reflected important or interesting dietary items. There was considerable intermarriage between the Northern Paiute, who occupied the study area, and the Shoshoni and Nevada Paiute and some bands living east of the Snake River were designated as half Shoshone and half Paiute. The subsistence economy of the Northern

Paiute was strongly oriented toward gathering and collecting because plant foods were more abundant and dependable than fowl, fish or mammals. However, when mammals were available, almost all the parts were utilized. Mammals provided skins, furs, tools and many other by-products of aesthetic and practical value. Insects were often eaten, beetles, grasshoppers, locusts, crickets, ants and caterpillars were consumed, as well as most eggs and larva. These dietary items, which thoroughly disgusted Euro-American observed, were readily available, storable, high protein foods. In addition, historic documents indicated several hundred plants were used by the Indians of the Great Basin for medicinal purposes, fiber sources and food.

Prior to European contact and the introduction of the horse, travel was by foot, probably with the aid of pack dogs. The Native people of the Great Basin, who practiced the ancestral lifeways into the 19th century were heirs to an extremely ancient cultural tradition with a technology both effective and efficient, with many multi-functional, light-weight and expendable tools.

From 1821-1846, contact between Native Americans and immigrants increases as the push westward continued. Exploration of new areas for furs, and overland migration routes, developments during this time posed the first serious problems and formed the basis for more intensive settlement and development. After 1847, pressures on the indigenous peoples increased as the use of overland travel routes increased. White settlements appeared for the first time and mining rushes concentrated Euro-Americans in parts of the regions and the Mormons settled into the eastern Great Basin area. By the early 1860s, the tensions between Euro-Americans and Native Americans erupted into several prolonged conflicts. Subsequently, the subjugation of Native Americans assured Whites of dominance and ushered in a troubled era of treaties and reservations. Basin Indians had to sustain their cultures within a context established and regulated by unreliable agents of the United States Government. During the 1880s, many Paiutes, including Winnemucca's people, lived in the vicinity of Fort McDermitt because they could get food and clothing there, and the military offered them protection. In 1889, Fort McDermitt was turned over to the Department of Interior and the land became public domain. In 1892, Indian people received allotments of land under the General Allotment Act of 1887 (the Dawes Act).

On January 17, 1936, approximately 21,500 acres were withdrawn from the public domain as a grazing reserve for the Indians of Fort McDermitt, Nevada. Today there are 16,936 acres of tribal land in Nevada, 18,269 acres of allotted land in Oregon and 145 acres of allotted land in Nevada.

The cattle barons with money and cattle from outside the state, flourished in southeastern Oregon. They acquired huge land holdings through the Oregon Swamp Lands Act, the Desert Land Act, by homesteading and by the purchase of preemptions and state-owned school lands. Large horse herds were ranged in the Owyhee Breaks by big-scale operators, and were thought to out-number cattle in the area by 1881. It was during the 1880s, that settlers increasingly came to southeast Oregon, and small communities were established near reliable water sources. Most of them were in the northern part of the county and all did not survive. By 1884, sheep had become more profitable than cattle and were moved to market in the east along the same routes that brought settlers to the west. The coming of the railroad also brought a new method of moving livestock to the stockyards. Both cattle and sheep raising prospered during the 1890s. Sheep outfits tended to be small and numerous, while cattle operations were larger and fewer. The Taylor

Grazing Act of 1934 along with the Great Depression let to an abrupt and permanent drop in the number of sheep, while fostering a long-term increase in the number of beef cattle, which has continued to the present.

Two cinnabar (mercury) mines, the Bretz and the Opalite, located in the far south the of the county, near McDermitt operated until shortly after World War II. Although numerous mining claims have been staked in the mineralized of the McDermitt Caldera, commercial quantities of minerals, with the exception of cinnabar have not been found

10. Wilderness Study Area

The northern 0.4 mile portion of the proposed fence would lie within the central southern end of the Fifteenmile Creek WSA, #OR-3-156. This 51,290-acre WSA is characterized by long, deep, steep-walled canyons (mostly tributaries of Whitehorse Creek) separated by broad, smoothly-rounded ridges. The canyon slopes are broken by rimrock, outcrops and scree slopes, while the ridge tops are flat or gently rolling. Although most of the WSA appears natural and devoid of signs of human activity, there are roads, ways, fences and water developments in the immediate vicinity of the proposed fence location. The close proximity of vehicular routes and lack of topographic or vegetative screening on ridge tops also limits opportunities for solitude. In conjunction with the other WSAs in the Trout Creek group and their variety of natural communities, this WSA supports a broad diversity of wildlife species. The Fifteenmile Creek WSA also features outstanding scenic quality.

11. Other Mandatory Elements

The following mandatory elements are either not present or would not be affected by the proposed action or alternatives:

	Affected	
Critical Elements	Yes	No
Air Quality		X
Areas of Critical Environmental Concerns		X
Prime and Unique Farmlands		X
Floodplains		X
Native American Religious Concerns		X
Threatened and Endangered Species		X
Hazardous and Solid Wastes		X
Ground Water Quality		X
Surface Water Quality		X
Wetlands and Riparian Zones		X
Wild and Scenic Rivers		X
Wilderness	X	
Invasive and Nonnative Species		X
Environmental Justice		X
Adverse Energy Impact		X

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Alternative I: Proposed Action

1. Vegetation

The impact of excluding livestock from the burn area is expected to increase the success of key species recovery following the fire. Exclusion will allow recovery of vigor and health of existing vegetation. Building the fence is not expected to cause any damage to the existing vegetation. No scalping or blading will be done to clear vegetation in order to install the temporary electric fence. The unburned vegetation would be grazed at normal utilization levels for this pasture. No long term impacts to vegetation are expected from the temporary fence and it is expected that any impacts resulting from livestock walking the fence and trampling vegetation would be substantially unnoticeable within two years. However, since the fence will be constructed along a 2 track way, cattle would be expected to use the way which will minimize trampling affects.

2. Soils and Water Resources

There are no expected impacts to the soils or to water resources from the proposed action over what has occurred from utilization of the pasture in preceding years.

3. Air Quality

Air quality is not affected.

4. Noxious Weeds

No noxious weeds are known to exist in the area. There will be very little ground disturbance while installing the temporary electric fence. Therefore, there is very little risk of new noxious weeds becoming established in the Sheepline Pasture.

5. Livestock Grazing

Implementation of this project would provide forage for 75 cattle for 35 days. Grazing use within the pasture should remain the same because of a decrease in livestock number. Once the upland utilization rates reach a maximum of 50%, the cattle would be removed from the pasture.

6. Wildlife

The fence construction phase of the project would result in big game and other species temporarily vacating the area. Theses effects are considered to be short term and insignificant.

New temporary fence construction may be expected to potentially cause some additional wildlife collisions, mortalities, and or injuries. Flagging would be expected to reduce the potential for these kinds of adverse impacts to big game. Because the fence is located away from sage grouse leks and there will be no wooden posts needed to complete the project, no increased sage grouse mortalities would be expected. The overall impacts to wildlife would not be considered significant.

7. Threatened or Endangered Species

Threatened or Endangered wildlife and plant species are not known to exist. The temporary electric fence would not cause any species to become listed.

8. Recreation and Visual Resources

The temporary electric fence construction would not impact recreationists or access routes. Visual impacts from the completed fence would be minimal, consisting of the relatively low-lying, hard-to-spot

wire and posts. Flagging would probably be the most visible feature when viewed from afar; visual intrusion would depend on the chosen color of flagging, the amount used, and the frequency of flags.

9. Cultural Resources

Prehistoric sites have been documented in this area through previous cultural resource surveys. Sites are located around water sources and were used primarily during the late spring through summer seasons during hot weather. The sites are lithic scatter sites and campsites that show occupation of an area throught the presence of flakes, tools and lithic procurement. Obsidian is abundant in the area as a naturally occurring source of tool stone and the area is covered with a diffuse lithic background scatter. The temporary fence, parallel to the previously disturbed road and across the slope of a ridge would have minimal to no impact on the cultural resources in the area.

10. Wilderness Study Area

Solitude would be temporarily disrupted in the immediate vicinity of the fence during installation. After installation, there would be a fairly minimal visual impact as described above. Impacts would remain within previously identified zones of influence from other man-made features within the WSA (i.e., fences, ways, troughs, etc.). There should not be any new surface disturbance related to completing the proposed fencing project.

B. Alternative II- No Action

Under this alternative, the temporary electric fence would not be constructed and livestock would be excluded from the entire pasture for at least two growing seasons.

1. Vegetation

The effects to vegetation would be consistent with the proposed action in the burned area. The vegetation outside the burned area would receive at least two more growing seasons of rest. The unburned vegetation has been rested in 2000 and 2001. Two more growing seasons of rest is not expected to substantially affect the vigor of the forage species. Under this alternative, trampling would not occur because the fence would not exist.

2. Soils

Soils would remain unchanged.

3. Air Quality

Air quality is not affected.

4. Noxious Weeds

No noxious weeds would be introduced in the Sheepline Pasture.

5. Livestock Grazing

Livestock grazing in other pastures of the McCormick Allotment would increase. The permittee may also be forced to sell some cattle or purchase hay to feed them if conditions do not allow the cattle to graze elsewhere.

6. Wildlife

Impacts described under the proposed action would be avoided completely.

7. Threatened and Endangered Species

There would be no impacts to threatened and endangered species.

8. Recreation and Visual Resources

Impacts to dispersed recreation activities would remain the same as it is now.

9. Cultural Resources

There would be no impacts to cultural resources under this alternative.

10. Wilderness Study Area

There would be no visual impacts or effects upon solitude beyond the current situation, since no new fence installation would occur.

MITIGATION MEASURES AND RESIDUAL IMPACTS

Mitigation measures would consist of cattle removal if upland utilization rates reach a maximum of 50%. At no time cattle are allowed in the burned area for two growing seasons. If the electric fence fails and cattle get into the burned area, cattle must be removed immediately and the fence repaired.

PERSONS CONSULTED

Fred Wilkinson, Livestock Permittee
Nick Wilkinson, Livestock Permittee

BLM STAFF SPECIALISTS

Tom Miles, Supervisory Rangeland Management Specialist
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Susie Manezes, Reality Specialist
Jack Wenderoth, Soil/Air/Water
Tom Christensen, Recreation/Wilderness
Jerry Erstrom, Weeds Specialist
Vern Pritchard, Engineer

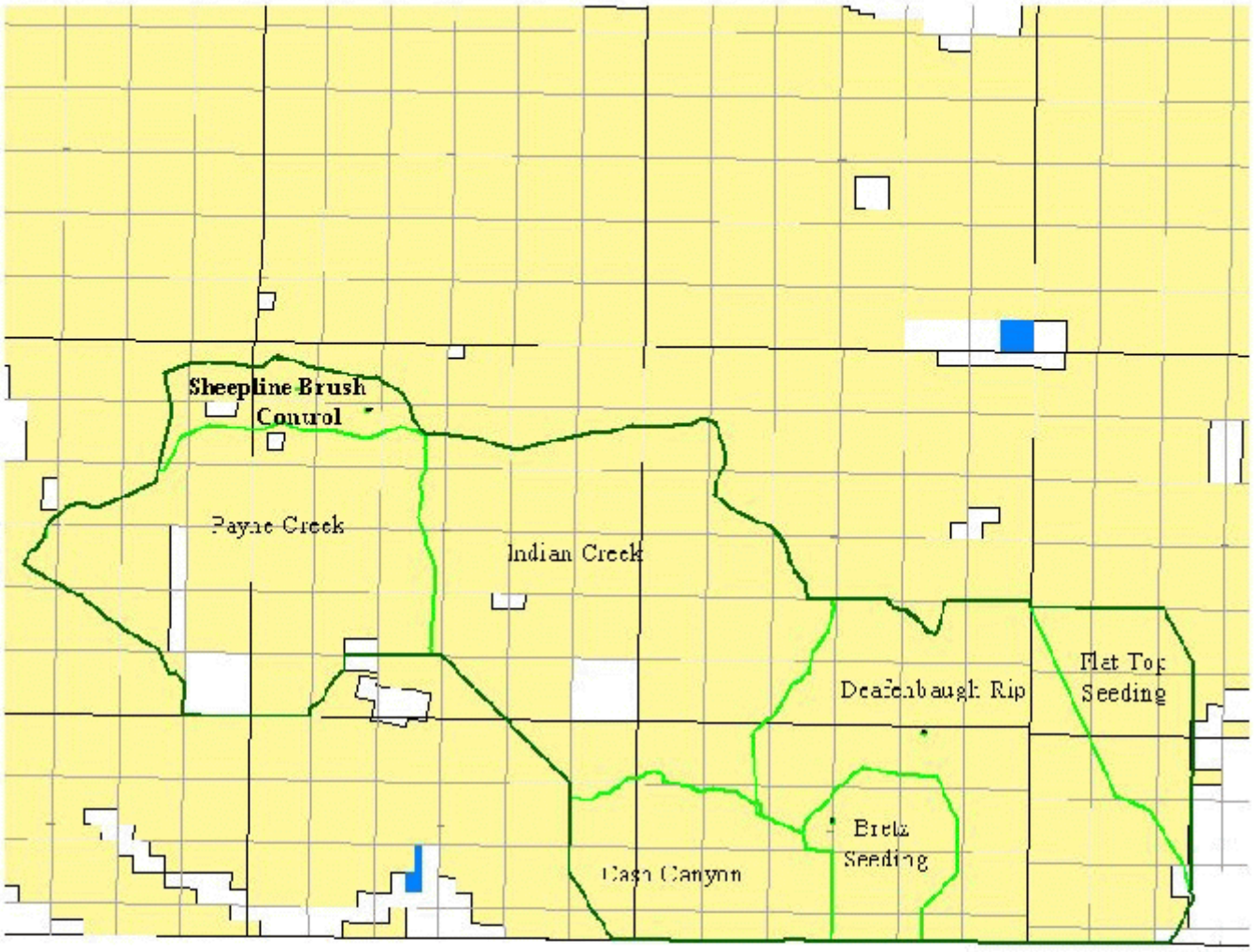

Figure 1. McCormick Allotment and associated pastures.
The McCormick Allotment has 7 pastures. GJ Livestock is authorized to graze cattle in these pastures. Notice Sheepline Brush Control Pasture in the northwest corner of the allotment.

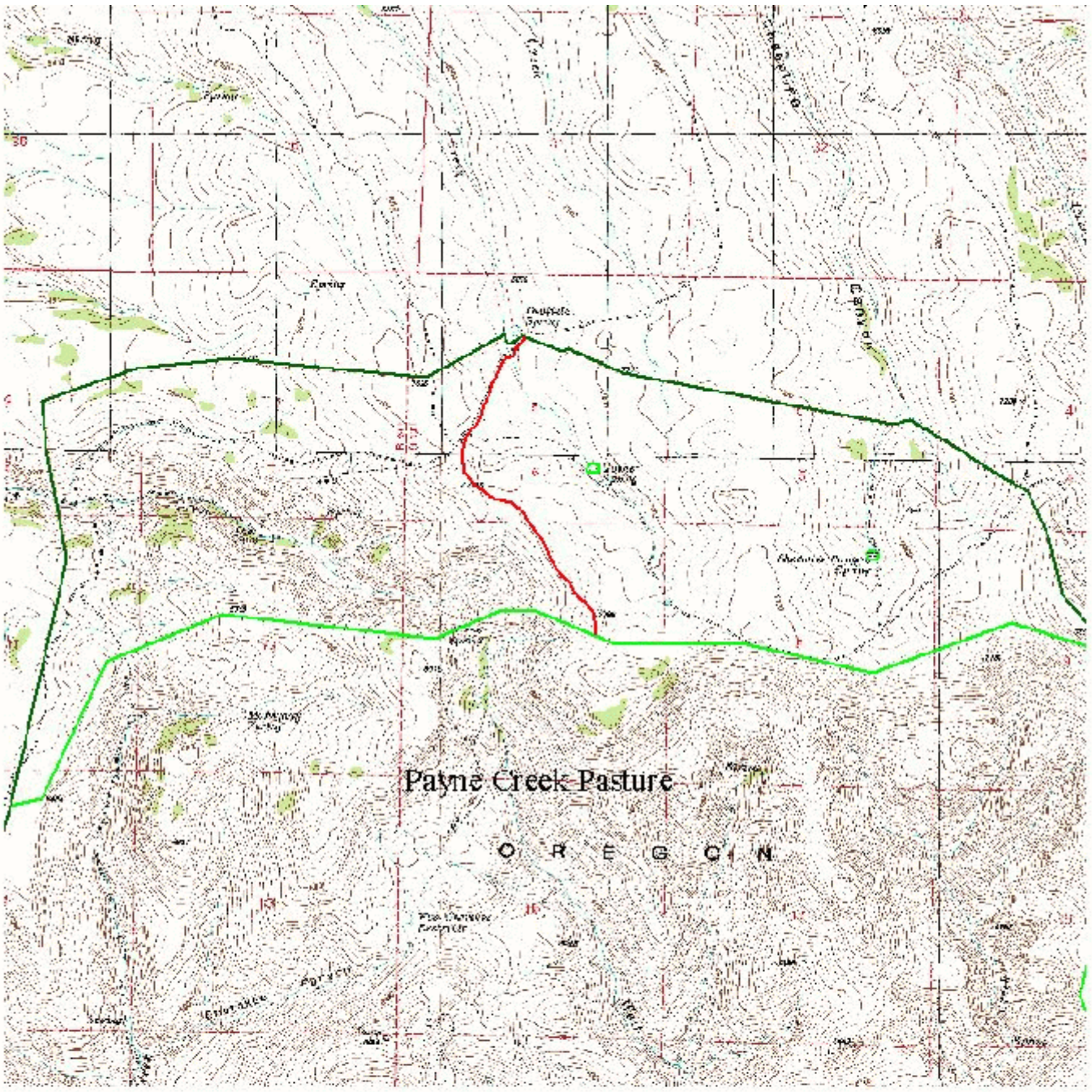

Figure 2. Map of Sheepline Pasture.
The proposed temporary electric fence is highlighted in red through the center of the pasture.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

I have reviewed EA, OR-030-02-020 and determined that the proposed action with mitigating measures will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required. My rational for this finding of no significant impacts is as follows: Impacts from the temporary fence are expected to be short term with no long term impacts expected. Some vegetation along the 1.4 miles of fence may get trampled by livestock walking the fence but the trampled vegetation would be expected to recover fully within two years. However, since the fence would be built along an existing two-track way, the cattle would be expected to use the way, minimizing trampling of vegetation. Short-term visual intrusions of the fence in the WSA is very minor as the area already has existing fences, ways and other imprints of man. Disruptions in wildlife movements and potential hazards to wildlife hitting the fence is minor and mitigated by flagging the fence. In addition, the fence would be removed in two years.

Approving this fence would allow the operator to graze cattle in the unburned portion of the pasture without causing any long-term significant impacts. The benefits to the operator not having to absorb that use elsewhere in the allotment or to take the cattle home to feed are considered substantial to the operator. Allowing this project is a reasonable action that reduces impacts of the burning of the Sheepline pasture to the livestock grazing operator while protecting the burned area within the pasture from livestock grazing use. No impacts were identified that would significantly affect any aspect of the human environment. I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the land use plan.

S/ Tom G Miles ACTING — April 25, 2002

Jerry Taylor — Date
Field Manager, Jordan Resource Area